

# DREAMSPEAKER

BC REGION - INAC FALL 2001



## Unique Partnership Showcases Aboriginal Art

By Bernice Timmer

A downtown Vancouver hotel has transformed its top floor into a captivating display of Aboriginal art.

The Listel Hotel, in conjunction with the Museum of Anthropology, has furnished 24 guest rooms on its top floor with Aboriginal art from local artists.

In a deal made earlier this year, the Museum Shop agreed to outfit the guest rooms with a menagerie of limited edition prints, ceramics and carvings. The end result is impressive. Stepping off the elevator onto the museum floor of the Listel Hotel, visitors are greeted with a spectacular wood carving, *The Hamatsa Mask*, carved by Fort Rupert artist Mervin Chile. The beautifully executed mask (pictured at right) signals the beginning of a cultural experience which includes the work of many other British Columbia Aboriginal artists. Artists currently featured on the museum floor of the Hotel include: Eugene Alfred, Judy Cranmer, Mark Henderson, Eugene Hunt, Susan Point and Harris Smith.

Pieces installed in the rooms are available for purchase by hotel guests and the installations will be changed periodically to keep the displays fresh. "The idea is to promote the Museum through display cases on our floor as well as through the rooms themselves. We hope to sell some of the work that we have on loan thereby benefitting the artist, the museum and the hotel," says Jim Mockford, General Manager for the Listel Hotel.

Revolving displays of art work will also allow the many artists the Museum Shop works with the ability to gain increased exposure. Current artists involved in the project are enthusiastic about the opportunity for increased exposure and potential sales to an international clientele.

"Most of them are really excited about it," says Deborah Tibbel, the Museum Shop Manager. "Its getting the work into as many venues as possible." The Museum is also excited about the opportunity to showcase their facility through in-room brochures and an exhibition catalogue. They hope visitors to Vancouver will take the opportunity to visit the Museum and learn more about the traditions and culture of Aboriginal people on the Northwest coast.

Outfitting the hotel rooms presented unique challenges not normally seen in a gallery installation. When the Museum Shop was working with the Listel Hotel to choose the current pieces, a number of factors, such as size, colour and durability were considered to ensure a good match with the existing decor. "A good part of the choice was practical - some things are too fragile, some things are too light, some things too small," Tibbel says. The Listel Hotel is used to working with partners on art installations. Since 1997 the hotel has partnered with the Buschlen Mowatt Gallery to continuously outfit two floors of the hotel with contemporary art work by regional and international artists.

In the spring, the Listel Hotel went to New York to promote the new museum floor through the Canadian Tourism Commission at the Media Marketplace Show. Mockford indicates that so far, response to the floor has been good, and he feels the project has been a positive experience for those involved. "The museum floor is a big win, a good idea and a great partnership."

*Hamatsa Mask by Mervin Chile*

